

Early years newsletter

Issue 1

WELCOME

A bit of encouragement

There is no lack of passion among Children in Scotland's members for the need to invest locally and nationally in early years services. But, somehow, bringing about the desired transformational change has proved difficult for everyone.

Our aim with this newsletter is to bring to your attention examples of early years practice alongside policy analysis and some practical sources of information in ways that bring policy to life, and confront existing policy with real life experiences.

We hope the combination will be encouraging, but expect that it will also be challenging. Our other hope is that you will respond to the issues raised by reflecting on the policy and practice over which you have influence, and voicing your own practical insights and experiences to inform the policies that have influence over you.

Babies and toddlers have no notion of job titles, budgets, or the differences between local authorities and NHS boards. Parents are often none the wiser on such professional and policy matters, and why should they be? So, we have grouped information together under three themes that Children in Scotland's members told us best expressed the key areas for focusing attention on early years: early learning and learning environments; supporting parents, and working together.

Scotland's Children's Sector Forum, open to all members of Children in Scotland, is the place to share your views and thoughts on the issues raised here. We urge you to let us know your views and your examples of practical experiences and case studies by either sending us an email to sburton@childreninscotland.org.uk or attending one of our upcoming events.

Early Learning and Learning Environments

Practical experience

Joyce Gilbert has returned to primary teaching after a 5-year secondment to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, where she worked on education policy, promoting outdoor learning, through the Real World Learning Partnership (www.realworldlearning-scotland.org.uk), and contributing to guidance for the Curriculum for Excellence. She is a founder of SpeyGrian, an educational trust set up to promote outdoor experiential learning, which also runs residential courses (www.speygrian.org.uk)

Her P1/P2 composite class at Arngask Primary includes children with additional support for learning needs.

January

I have been outside every day with the children and visited the wood next to the school twice last week. Kids found a hibernating hawthorn shield bug, which was quite exciting and also a good find to record. I was interested to see on the internet that its distribution is changing - was only recorded as far south as Nottingham 100 years ago. My friend Jane Wilkinson (who is a willow worker/Forest School leader) joined us for a morning and she will be back with us on

Thursday to build fairy houses...

February

I was out in the adjacent woodland with my kids again today in the rain and mud. Despite notes to parents, not all the children were as well dressed for the weather as I would have liked. But, it wasn't that cold, so we went out anyway...

March

I am out most days. Today, we were out in the school grounds twice drawing around our shadows at different times of day (science). We'll be out tomorrow to measure the shadows (maths) and also for music (expressive arts). I teach music every day using a technique called Kodaly and this lends itself to the outdoors. I was out in the woodland on Monday for an hour and a half with children in pairs creating a miniature journey for Hansel & Gretel using little kits I had put together (language and social subjects). Each of their mini kits included wool, a magnifier, six laminated positional words (to, from, over, under, through, up, across and along) and four tiny flags to place at points of interest in their journey. On Thursday, we will be out all morning with a friend who is a willow worker making fairy houses (language, technology, art). Parents have been invited to join us on Thursday. We usually

Policy matters

Curriculum pressures There is a growing movement towards emulating the outdoor learning and nature kindergarten experiences found in Norway, Sweden and Denmark. The freedom within *Curriculum for Excellence*, particularly during the pre-school period, supports this kind of approach. The Early Years Framework is also committed to promoting play-based learning during early primary.

However, in Scotland, formal school – that is learning how to read, write and work with numbers – begins when children start their first year of school in primary 1. Some children will be approaching their sixth birthday if they have delayed entry, while others will be four and a half.

This first year of formal learning is possibly the least flexible for teachers, who are urged to ensure the basics of reading and writing are achieved. This can make it difficult to work in ways that are more challenging to established processes of formal learning. The countries whose outdoor play and learning Scotland is beginning to emulate, plan for formal learning to begin at age six.

The last ten years have seen a small but growing number of families deferring their child's primary start until they are aged five and a half. Local statistics and anecdotal evidence suggest these numbers may have stabilised, but they still indicate some parents' awareness that starting formal learning early is not necessarily a good idea for all children. The Scottish Government is no longer collecting deferral statistics, so it will be more tricky to see easily how this trend continues nationally.

Encouragement for primary staff to embrace Nordic methods and build on approaches begun in nurseries needs to be sensitive to the current curriculum's demands. Further adoption of these approaches should be considered alongside a rethink about the starting point for formal learning and the potential for increasing the provision of early childhood education and care.

also play games and read stories in the woodland.

On Tuesday, it was warm enough to lie on our backs, close our eyes and listen to the birds. I also allow a bit of time for free play and exploration.

Joyce Gilbert, P1/P2 teacher, Arngask Primary, Perth

Read about Joyce's trip to Bodo,

Norway

<http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=6071254>

as part of a Learning and Teaching Scotland study visit to some of the places featured in the case studies in *Children in Scotland's Northern Lights: building better childhoods* publication -

http://childreninscotland.org.uk/html/pub_tshow.php?ref=PUB0204

These issues will be explored further during a session with the director of education and skills from North Ayrshire Council at the Children in Europe annual conference on 6 June: <http://www.childreninscotland.org.uk/zerotothree>. Children in Scotland is the English language publisher of *Children in Europe* magazine.

Taking risks Taking learning outside can make life unpredictable. There are risks involved. However, shying away from potential danger is a risk in itself. Below are two pictures that raise issues of risk in learning environments.

Being indoors doesn't need to mean being risk free



Vanla, nearly two, stands on a kitchen counter, working with 23-month-old Maia and Eva, 30

months, to set the table, while an adult looks on. How do you feel about this? Is it an example of resourceful children, thinking creatively and taking responsibility – or one of young children in a potentially dangerous situation? Do our different reactions matter? Have your say at www.facebook.com/pages/Children-in-Europe/168452433202347

Sand in your eye



In Berlin, few primary and nursery schools are without natural play spaces, which generally include plenty of sand. In Scotland, some local authorities have policies against sand and water play in schools. This is a challenge to anyone wanting to develop challenging, fun outdoor play spaces within school grounds to

stimulate physical activity, creativity, and social skills.

Grounds for Learning is working with eight primary schools on developing their playgrounds, taking inspiration from a visit last summer to primary schools and nurseries in Berlin by GFL's Alastair Seaman. Find out more online about how schools and nurseries in Berlin provide adventurous outdoor play:
<http://www.ltl.org.uk/spaces/casestudy.php?cs=31>

Right now, Alastair Seaman and colleagues from Architecture and Design Scotland are gathering inspiration – images, stories and ideas – from early learning environments across Scotland. There are plans for a study tour to some of the schools working with Alastair and colleagues to rethink and redesign nursery and primary playgrounds. This tour is planned for autumn 2011. If you're interested in this activity, then please contact Alastair – aseaman@ltl.org.uk

Take it further

I'm a teacher get me OUTSIDE here! Read about 'Blue tarp on a windy day', 'guttering in preschools' and the 'magic of masking tape' - Inspirational and practical ideas, photos, thinking and reflection on being with children outdoors
<http://creativestartlearning.blogspot.com/>

Learning and Teaching Scotland is currently working on a resource pack for outdoor learning for those ages 3 to 18, which should be out later in the year.

Keep an eye out for more information www.ltscotland.org.uk/outdoorlearning

A new publication to be launched in June 2011, *Making Space: architecture and design for children and young people*, will explore holistic

approaches to architecture and design for children and showcase the winning and shortlisted entries to this international architecture award. The entries were judged not just on architectural merit, but also for the contribution they have made to improving the totality of children's learning experiences – and, in many cases, the lives of whole communities.

One of the defining examples of a holistic approach is the work of Michele Zini, who led a research team to create a 'genetic code' for the design of spaces for children. His team included not only representation from architecture and design, but psychology, science, education and art. The focus of their findings is on the 'soft qualities' that help create caring and stimulating environments for children such as light, colour, touch, sound and smell, and the organisation of space to facilitate relationship building and support inclusion.

The publication will be launched on 29 June 2011. Contact npay@childreninscotland.org.uk for details of the publication and hgoodrum@childreninscotland.org.uk for information about the launch.

Smarter places – Architecture and Design Scotland's website for school design. Find out about ideas for a combined nursery and primary campus in Dunoon where children and adults want outdoor and indoor space to have equal importance
<http://www.smarterplaces.org/>

Supporting Parents

Practical experience

Family workers at Quarriers

Early years practitioners at Quarriers Family Resource

Centre in Ruchazie in the east end of Glasgow are called family workers, reflecting the belief that supporting children's learning and well-being needs to be done within the context of the child's family and community.

An important part of the centre's support services of family workers and social workers is the nursery for children up to the age of three. Staff understand that the way in which they engage with children and their parents is the key to developing real, sensitive, thoughtful and reflective relationships. Knowledge and understanding of both children and their carers helps our staff create an environment for learning and well-being, and provide support for parents to develop the close, loving, secure family relationships that children need.

Each child has an individual learning story portfolio, where observations of the child's learning experiences are recorded. Parents also contribute to this. Our planning is based on our understanding of the child's interests developed through observations of the child in nursery and in discussion with parents who share their observations of what their children do at home. We would like all our children's key family workers to be able to do home visits on a regular basis throughout the year, but at the moment, funding limitations mean we can't afford to increase the number of nursery staff that we need to enable this to happen. Nevertheless, through our daily

discussions with parents, we are able to gain a deeper and wider understanding of the children in nursery. At the same time, parents hopefully gain a deeper understanding and new perspective on how their children learn and why they behave the way they do. Our aims, values and beliefs can be summarised by Reggio founder, Loris Malaguzzi: 'Our image of the child is rich in potential, strong, powerful, competent and, most of all, connected to adults and other children'.

Trevor Chandler, Ruchazie Family Centre, Glasgow –
Trevor.Chandler@quarriers.org.uk

Policy matters

Working with families Ruchazie Family Centre emphasises the core importance of staff involving and learning from the parents of the children in their care, which is to everyone's benefit. This attitude begins with valuing each child's parents and wider family, rather than focusing solely on their troubles and their needs. It is not just about different language, but different thinking and the realisation that changes will only be possible in people's lives when they are supported by positive relationships.

The Child Poverty Strategy for Scotland has a helpful overview of asset-based approaches to working with families. A simple starting concept is 'instead of starting with the problems, start with what is working and what people care about'. Download the strategy here: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/03/14094421/0>

The Government has set up an assets alliance: 'a loose network of practitioners of assets approaches or those interested in developing and promoting them. The alliance will agitate and advocate for such approaches, and help generate conversations and debates across Scotland about assets and the shift in thinking about individuals, families and communities which assets approaches entail'. Chief medical officer Harry Burns spoke at the network's opening event and you can view his presentation online: <http://www.scdc.org.uk/assets-alliance-scotland/>

A new generation of family centres? Professor Susan Deacon's report: *Joining the Dots: A Better Start for Scotland's Children*, reflected many of the issues raised by Children in Scotland's early years network, including an enthusiasm for developing more children and family centres. The report sees and encourages the opportunity 'to forge new multifaceted local partnerships and delivery models – to combine public fundraising, philanthropic giving and charitable support'. In an interview appearing in the April issue of *Children in Scotland* magazine, Susan Deacon also indicates that she is in broad agreement with the EC Communication on Early Childhood Education and Childcare (ECEC), including its affirmation of the need for universally accessible, fully integrated services.

As *Joining the Dots* identifies, there is certainly no lack of material on early years policy and research. Two reports from England, with cross party support, focus on the need to rethink early years services. While they generally relate only to English policy, they are another source of ideas (good and bad depending on your view), and are likely to have some influence in Scotland through Westminster UK policy that impacts

on young children. Two particular points are worth highlighting: Frank Field's wide-ranging report entitled *The Foundation Years* advocates establishing the 'Foundation Years' as a stage of equal importance to primary and secondary, with ministerial responsibility. Graham Allen's first report *Early Intervention: the next steps* analysed the effectiveness of intervention programmes in the early years. His second report, due before the summer, will look at how the private sector can contribute to funding such initiatives, but the suggestion is that the social returns on investment can be attractive to private investors who might supply funds for a return (in addition to the donations of charities, trusts and philanthropists). Both reports propose a *targeted* (i.e. non-universal) approach to meeting the needs of vulnerable families.

Read the reports here:
Susan Deacon's *Joining the Dots* report: www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/343337/0114216.pdf
Frank Fields' *The Foundation Years* report: www.frankfield.com/review-on-poverty-and-life-chances/
Graham Allen's *Early Intervention* report: www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/early-intervention-next-steps.pdf

The WAVE Trust, similarly to Graham Allen, has carried out a rapid review of international literature relating to early intervention. Forty seven practices were analysed and the report draws six main conclusions that include: those who prioritise investment in the earliest years secure the best outcomes; the quality of parenting/care is the key to a successful society; and galvanising the community is the secret of success. Although it has received less media coverage than other recent reports, it is a valuable resource for what works and why in the early years. *International experience of*

early intervention for children, young people and their families (2010) is available to download at:

http://www.wavetrust.org/reports/wave_trust_international_early_intervention_review_2010_0.pdf

The language of rationing The European Commission ECEC Communication (see below) is very clear about the negative impact of targeting services and benefits to vulnerable groups as an effective means of improving services. It draws these conclusions on the grounds that it is difficult to 'identify the target group reliably'; it can 'create stigma', and may 'lead to segregation at later stages of education'. Often targeting is used in phrases concerning the current financial climate and the need to be more efficient. In fact, attempts to identify target groups, and the effects of isolating them from other social groups work against the future, much talked of, 'social returns on investment'. This is using targeting as rationing, and rationing is not money saving in the medium to long term. This has been identified by other European research reports such as the *Nesse Report - Early childhood education and care: key lessons from research for policy makers*, under 'Rationale 1'. Read it online: <http://www.nesse.fr/nesse/activities/reports/ecec-report-pdf>.

Talk of early intervention sits alongside discussion of targeting. Early intervention is used by some professions to refer to intervening early with people of all ages to prevent problems arising later. It is now increasingly used to refer to the importance of intervening early in people's lives – before and after birth and during the early formative years of childhood. However, the extent and form of early intervention in the first years of life relates to the support provided by what is sometimes described as the early

years (or ECEC) infrastructure or system.

The language of Early Childhood Education and Care Confusion is often generated by the words we use to describe aspects of young children's lives. Preschool, childcare, daycare, nursery, primary, after school care, are examples. While to some the differences are very clear, the practical mixing of different kinds of settings in the everyday life of a child can make the linguistic distinctions seem artificial. Confusion is compounded by a lack of clarity about what is meant by 'early years'. One understanding – the official range of Scotland's Early Years Framework – is to consider conception to mid-primary as the age range, which means challenging the official (and to an extent arbitrary) gateways along the way, with preschool funding just after 3 years, and school entry between 4 and 5 years.

The phrase Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is used at European level to address the key issue of integrating the historically separate 'childcare' and 'education' services. In many EC countries, it covers a wider age range than in Scotland as children start school later. The new framework provided by the European Commission Communication on Early Childhood Education and Care published in February 2011 emphasises the importance of integrated, universal ECEC services for preschool children (it does not cover school age childcare). Children in Scotland members can read an interview with the European Commission policy officer responsible for this area, in the current issue of *Children in Europe*. Nora Militay encourages member states to apply for EU structural funds to invest in early years services. http://ec.europa.eu/news/culture/110222_en.htm

Working out the costs *The costs of childcare* is a report by Children in Scotland exploring the issues, inconsistencies and complex funding for early childhood education and care in Scotland, and the growing divide between care for children under and over 3 years of age.

A survey of local authorities and childcare providers found that childcare costs are increasing and that overall average childcare costs for 25 hours a week are £84, i.e. more than half the gross average part time weekly earnings of £160. Costs varied across Scotland and different charging structures are in place.

Widespread concern was expressed by those contacted for the survey that non-statutory childcare (anything other than preschool entitlement) would face cuts. There has also been a slight decrease in the number of registered childcare centres, and the number of centres providing preschool education has gone down by over 3%. At the same time, the number of children under five has risen by around 5%.

Members of Children in Scotland can download the report online free at www.childreninscotland.org.uk/members. Please email sburton@childreninscotland.org.uk if you need help to access a copy or you would like to suggest what the next steps should be in helping to end the many structural divisions in services for those under and over three.

Many of the issues raised by the report – and how EU structural funds might be used to invest in services – will be discussed at the Children in Europe conference **Improving services for 0-3s** on 6 June, www.childreninscotland.org.uk/zerotothree

Take it further

A 'Dads2b' resource, a national, antenatal education pack (specifically

tailored for work with fathers and male partners, by NHS and National Childbirth Trust antenatal teachers, trainers and parent support professionals in Scotland), will soon be available across Scotland. Children in Scotland, with Scottish Government funding under the project 'Making the Gender Equality Duty Real for Children, Young People and their Fathers', has been working collaboratively with representatives of the National Childbirth Trust (NCT), NHS Lothian, West Lothian Sure Start and Fathers Network Scotland to produce this resource, with further support from NHS Health Scotland and the Fatherhood Institute.

The resource will be free online through the NCT website and on a CD ROM, and will be included in NHS Health Scotland's new Scottish Parent Education Pack, scheduled to be completed in June 2011. There will be a launch event in September, followed by a series of roadshow events across Scotland, at which the Dads2b resource will be introduced and distributed to professionals with an interest in antenatal education and/or providing support to current and prospective fathers (biological or *de facto*).

For more information about the 'Making the Gender Equality Duty Real' project visit:
<http://makinggenderequalityreal.org.uk>

Mellow bumps Initial results from a new antenatal programme led by Dr Christine Puckering suggest that taking part in the session was accompanied by a substantial reduction in maternal anxiety, depression and irritability. Learning how her just-born baby could communicate from the moment after birth shocked one mother – who asked why no one had told her before, despite this being her fifth baby. Find out more in the April issue of

Children in Scotland, and at www.mellowparenting.com

Working Together

Practical experience

Early assessment team

A team of midwives, health visitors, social workers, family support workers and an infant mental health worker have combined their expertise in one Scottish Borders locality to improve antenatal and postnatal care for vulnerable women.

This has meant a combination of one-to-one personal support – with home visits for pregnant women and including grandmothers-to-be in pre-birth planning meetings – and professional collaboration with links to adult mental health staff, welfare benefits and housing teams. The result is changed behaviour and more efficient professional practice.

In 2010/2011, 96% of those who intended to breastfeed succeeded, meaning that 56% of 155 young women supported by the team were breastfeeding, which the young mothers attribute to the one-to-one antenatal care they were able to access. This outcome is far above the existing government target of 33% of babies being breastfed at 6 to 8 weeks. For the small number of babies who may not return home from hospital because of the risk of harm from their families, planning for a more permanent, secure home is made early, in order to give the baby the best possible start. In 2008/9, the youngest

child brought for assessment to the 'Permanence Panel' was 18 months old. In 2001, two babies (allocated to social workers in the team) were assessed for a permanent alternative home at 4 months old. This significant shift in practice results from assessment and decisions begun during pregnancy and with the focus on the best support for the baby.

The team has helped develop six young mums groups across the Borders, where young mums-to-be are encouraged to join. They stay with the group until their baby is about one year-old. The young women help to develop the content of regular sessions and drop ins (infant brain development, first aid, play, and support on housing and benefit issues, budgeting and debt), and staff provide free baby equipment like slings, and work with each mother on personal scrapbooks, in addition to the Ready Steady Baby book.

Linda Davidson and Rebecca Wade,
LDavidson@scotborders.gsx.gov.uk, 01750 21926. Read the full report online at <http://www.scotborders.gov.uk/life/livingandsocialcare/careanddsupport/childrenandfamilysupport/36118.html>

Policy matters

Maternity and early years

The positive relationships between the early years staff and young women in the Borders is enabled by having a cross-sector, well-supported team. Trust between young women and the professionals offering them

support is vital.

Young women who are part of the Family Nurse Partnership programme in Edinburgh have testified to the importance of trust in their relationships with family nurses. The programme's annual report included these comments: 'No-one tells you how to be a good parent. Mandy is a bit like a parenting manual that you can refer to at any time', 'I would absolutely trust Claire with my baby', and 'Pam is like my friend - she doesn't judge me'.

Although the early assessment team and Family Nurse Partnership are specialised services, it doesn't mean that such beneficial ways of working cannot be applied to universal maternity care.

A raft of maternity and early years health policy documents have been launched by the Scottish Government over the last few months. There is plenty to get through, because there are plenty of good intentions. However, if you have limited time and a general interest it's probably best to browse through the actions focused on inequalities: start with *Reducing Antenatal Health Inequalities: Outcome Focused Evidence into Action Guidance*, and consider *A Pathway of Care for Vulnerable Families (0-3)*. Both highlight where extra efforts need to be focused. *Reducing Antenatal Health Inequalities* states that 'Supporting behavioural change should use person-centred, asset-based approaches and happen alongside any collaborative support needed in relation to a woman and her families social circumstances'.

More general frameworks for practice are: *Improving maternal and infant nutrition: a framework for action* and the *Refreshed Framework for Maternity Care*.

A New Look at Hall 4 - the Early Years - Good Health for Every Child includes the recommendation that a

24-30 month review should be carried out for all children.

Also of interest is the CMACE *Saving Mothers' Lives* UK report: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1471-0528.2010.02847.x/pdf> which has among its recommendations the need to have pre-pregnancy counselling services available to all women planning a pregnancy and all those with a pre-existing medical illness.

One area of inequality is in access to services by those from minority ethnic or cultural backgrounds. A DVD *New European Migrants and the NHS - Learning from Each Other* is a training aid for NHS maternity care staff working with migrants from Eastern and Central Europe. It includes interviews with new migrants talking about their expectations when they arrived in Scotland, the differences with their home country and the issues they faced. The barriers or difficulties faced by new migrants are not always unique to them, but are likely to be experienced by other disadvantaged or vulnerable groups, making this a useful resource for anyone considering equality issues in healthcare. Contact Dermot Gorman for copies at Dermot.Gorman@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk. The training manual to accompany the DVD can be downloaded here: <http://www.healthscotland.com/documents/3247.aspx>

And, finally, a consultation has just closed for the *Scottish Women's Health Maternity Record (SWHMR)*. This is the document completed by midwives when they first meet a pregnant woman, and discuss her health background. It is normally held throughout pregnancy by the woman. The data is used to inform the woman's and foetus' health needs and the level and variety of support required, but is also used to compile national data about pregnant women. It is often the first encounter that a

future parent makes with health services and the information and relationships developed here have the potential for far-reaching positive impacts, as well as simply ensuring better health and health care during pregnancy and birth. If you would like to know more, then you can view the consultation documents online here: www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org/default.aspx?page+12484

Importance of a united workforce

Budget cuts and financial pressures can result in unhelpful feelings of competition between different sectors. The increasing attention and financial priority given to the early years can seem a threat to those working with teenagers and young adults. One particular example of the need for all those working with children and young people to feel united rather than divided by these funding pressures was made clear in the recent release of research on health behaviour in school-aged children (see below).

The research finds that, while overall reports of drunkenness and weekly drinking have declined since 2006, girls' drinking is not decreasing significantly. At age 15, girls are more likely than boys to report drunkenness. There is a lack of data about young people's behaviour post-16, but it seems unlikely that habits established in teenage years would disappear quickly, which is to the detriment of young women's health, and means there is continuing concern for the prevalence of fetal alcohol harm, if and when these young women choose to, or unintentionally, become pregnant.

The common thread uniting all work following the life course of children is support for parenting. Whether that is during the early years, or for the parents of older children and young people, (or whether it is support for young people themselves in preparation for their

eventual parenthood), keeping this cycle in mind helps to dispel notions of competition.

Children in Scotland is publishing two brief introductions, one on the facts and issues around fetal alcohol harm and the lifelong brain damage that can occur *in utero* to the developing baby – and another on pre-conception health more generally. Both are written for all those working with young people, families, and families-to-be. For example, you might not know that in families where the first child is harmed by alcohol in pregnancy, second and third children are at a much higher risk of greater fetal alcohol harm (if drinking patterns remain the same). One practical implication of this is that alcohol-related training that is most often directed at midwives should also be undertaken by health visitors, who have the continuing, and potentially more influential, contact with families with young children.

Members of Children in Scotland can read the briefings from <http://www.childreninscotland.org.uk/docs/EYFbriefingsFetalAlcoholv6.pdf> Research published in March shows school-age children in Scotland appear to be improving their diets and brushing their teeth. Other trends (such as girls' mental health and use of alcohol) are less positive. *Health Behaviour in School-aged Children* is a World Health Organisation cross-national study, which covers 43 countries. The international coordinating centre is based in Edinburgh. For more details of the report, visit <http://www.education.ed.ac.uk/cahru/research/hbscscotland/publications.php>

Take it further

The Scottish Government is consulting on the core skills, knowledge and understanding, and values that should be common to

everyone working with children: 'The "children's workforce" includes anyone working (paid or unpaid) with any child, young person or family across health, education, social services, justice and community services, in the public, private or voluntary sectors. The policy of early intervention means that some of the relevant workforce may work with adults'.

Scotland's Children's Sector Forum, which is open to all members of Children in Scotland, is holding a discussion event to inform the response to this consultation on 12 May at Children in Scotland's offices in Edinburgh. If interested, please email scollier@childreninscotland.org.uk. This session will be chaired by Peter Diamond, assistant director for education, Orkney.

The proposed common core is intended to remove the barriers that exist between different organisations, workers and sectors allowing them to work and communicate more effectively together. Such a core should also equip the workforce with the skills, knowledge, understanding and values to intervene early, tackle inequalities and build capacity within children, young people, families and communities to better help themselves. The consultation runs until 15 June 2011. See <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/03/14130453/4>

Children in Scotland has published a series of publications examining issues about the children's sector workforce, and looking at practice in other European countries such as Denmark – all free online. These include, *Working it out:* <http://www.childreninscotland.org.uk/workforce> and *Working for Inclusion* <http://www.childreninscotland.org.uk/wfi>

You can add your voice to the debate at the Children in Europe annual conference on Monday 6 June

– Children in Europe special conference **Improving Services for 0-3s**, to be held at New Lanark World Heritage Village. Alongside speakers from Scotland, there will be representatives from Hungary, Finland, Portugal and Italy. Book online at www.childreninscotland.org.uk/zerotothree. The companion magazine – Issue 20 of *Children in Europe*, 'Europe's youngest citizens: services and leave provision for under threes' is out now and available free of charge to Children in Scotland members.

Costing the benefits There is a growing number of reports that look at the savings to be made by investing in the early years. While there might be disputes about the calculations, the principle is agreed. And yet, there are cuts and spending freezes. Do these reports help you? What information or support do you need to make your case? – let Scotland's Children's Sector Forum know your views by emailing policy@childreninscotland.org.uk

There has been an important development that is expected to continue in the newly elected Scottish Parliament – building upon the recent work of the Finance Committee on its *Inquiry into preventative spending, final report – a summary of ideas and opinions gathered through evidence submitted to the parliament during Autumn 2010*.

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/Finance/reports-11/fir11-01.htm>. The Committee recommended that the early years were the prime opportunity for such preventative spending. Will future Scottish budgets reflect this understanding?

A recent cost-benefit analysis of large-scale, publicly funded early intervention programmes, funded by the US National Institutes of Health, found that a comprehensive early

education programme is estimated to generate almost \$11 of economic benefits over a child's lifetime for every dollar spent initially.
www.schoolfunding.info/news/policy/2011-02Reports.php3

Backing the future: why investing in children is good for us all states that: 'The UK could save billions and avoid many social problems by shifting towards a preventative model of investment in children and young people'.

<http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/backing-future>

An Early Action Fund totalling £6.8 million is available to support 1 year's work by national voluntary sector bodies in Scotland offering frontline services in the following areas: play/activities, parenting support, the provision of childcare, activity to improve child and family health, supporting families to help themselves and building family and community capacity to improve outcomes for children. More details are available at:

<http://www.inspiringscotland.org.uk/Home/Our-Funds/Early-Years/Details-Of-The-Fund>

A new publication *Poverty in Scotland 2011* is available at:

http://povertyalliance.org/publications_detail.asp?pubs_id=67

Contributions from academics, practitioners and campaigners explore approaches that have had a positive impact, while critiquing those that have failed to ameliorate poverty, worked to deepen its effects or have increased the stigma people experiencing poverty face. It includes a chapter on child poverty in the early years, highlighting the lack of attention focused on the circumstances of children under three experiencing poverty. Let us know your views by emailing policy@childreninScotland.org.uk

The Election Children's issues were sadly lacking in the campaigning and debate for this election. However, children's sector organisations have raised plenty of issues in their manifestos, and Children in Scotland published a briefing comparing the manifestos of organisations promoting early years issues, highlighting areas of common concern. http://www.childreninScotland.org.uk/docs/policy/pre-election_briefing.pdf
May's issue of *Children in Scotland*

magazine also carries a detailed manifesto comparison.

You can also read what was said at the recent Children in Scotland hustings event. Early years was a key topic of discussion – with the SNP backing legislation to implement changes to early years policy and the Liberal Democrats promising significant new funding into early years services. All parties agreed it is now time for action and sustained investment. Joined up thinking and working were also key to moving beyond frontline services being impeded by excessive bureaucracy. The Conservatives were keen to increase the flexibility of childcare, and Labour wanted early diagnosis of special needs with support services on hand. The Green Party backed children's right to play and said they would halt the sale of playing fields and other play spaces. For more details see:

<http://makinggenderequalityreal.org/docs/ChildrenInScotlandHustings.pdf>
Children in Scotland will be publishing a post election briefing, summarising and analysing the likely priorities and prospects for action in the early years policy.

This document is one in a series of Children in Scotland publications that highlight issues, research or areas of policy and practice that have a particular impact on children's early years and on the diverse workforce that provides services for this group.

Published by Children in Scotland - working for children and their families (SC003527)

This publication is funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Child and Maternal Health Division of the Scottish Government.

